



c.1
Property Of
Sierra Historic Sites Assoc
Library

THE MADERA COUNTY HISTORIAN

MADERA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY

Volume XIII - Number 1

April 1973

BUCHANAN

Madera County, California



Buchanan - 1893

BUCHANAN! Many residents of Madera County will probably say, "Never heard of it." However, since 1968, Buchanan has been in the news, for several reasons. First in 1968, when San Francisco State College began a survey of the Archaeological Resources of the Buchanan Reservoir Region. This survey was started because there was a definite plan to construct two dams in Madera County on the Chowchilla and Fresno Rivers.

The Madera County Historical Society recently published a story on the Hidden Dam project. So much interest has been created about Buchanan Dam, that the Historical Society decided to write the history of that area also.

Information and records on the town of Buchanan are rather meager, but, thanks to a few who have some family records and pictures, plus some early newspapers, we will attempt to tell the story of this very interesting place.

Early maps show a road, which is still in use, under the name Buchanan Hollow Road. This road comes from the west across Merced County and into the Buchanan area, then continues on to Raymond.

The name Buchanan comes from Buchanan Hollow; however, the name Buchanan was not in honor of James Buchanan, the 15th President of the United States. There was a man named Buchanan who, in the early days (about the middle 1850's), in this area, cut and hauled wild oat hay for the cavalry horses of the Army stationed at Fort Millerton. This is the best information we can secure at this time. We have been unable to ascertain Mr. Buchanan's first name.

Buchanan became a fast growing little town in the early 1860's. Copper mines were located there in 1863, July 25 - 27. The three veins were called Eureka, Reynolds, and Buchanan. The initial filings were made by S. S. Reynolds, William Plaskett, Jonathan Rea, and H. C. Daulton on August 7, 1863 at Millerton (Fresno County Seat), also J. P. Lane, Nathan Buchanan, M. McCartie, Dr. Fitzhugh, J. W. Stevenson, A. M. Lane, and Henry Jesahke followed them. The peak population was probably 1000 to 1500 (some historians state as many as 3000.) This was reached in the early 1870's.

Not only copper mining and gold mining (placer and panning), but cattle, sheep, and grain added to the growth of this little town.

Like all early mining towns, stores, saloons, a post office and a school were established. We have found no record of a church building, but there were church services there at various times in the school house.

A post office was opened September 19, 1873. Joseph Brown was the first postmaster. It was at this time that the origin of the name "Buchanan" was established. When they applied for the post office, Washington, D. C. objected, as they assumed it was to honor James Buchanan and this was not acceptable then, so citizens of the Buchanan area proved satisfactorily that it was named after the man mentioned earlier in this story, and so the post office opened.

Lewis Orrin Sharp was appointed postmaster in 1878, but did not live long after his appointment. He was buried in the Rea cemetery near Buchanan.

Lewis Orrin Sharp the 2nd succeeded his father as postmaster in 1878 and continued holding this office until 1881, when the Sharp family moved to Madera.

We have no records on postmasters from 1881 until Caesar A. Vignolo was appointed on the 8th day of September 1898. He continued until June 15, 1904. After that, the area was served by the Raymond post office. Buchanan was one of the earliest post offices in the State.

An interesting item was found in a Fresno Expositor dated July 20, 1870: "Our celebrated weekly mail arrived on Monday night, direct from Stockton by Stage. It brought 3 or 4 letters, but not a paper! Mail carrier said there was no mail for Buchanan. If there wasn't what did the postmaster do with it? We are of the opinion the Stockton post office doesn't amount to much, as we haven't received a paper since the last of June."

No doubt the poor service caused the inhabitants of Buchanan to press for a post office, as one was opened three years later. Also, the Central Pacific railroad came to Fresno in 1872, and this helped too. The post office in those days was a popular social gathering place; it must have been disappointing not to receive their newspapers; their only touch with the outside world.



POST OFFICE AND GENERAL STORE

Buchanan had a school very early; no exact date has been found, but we know a school was there before 1870. A schoolhouse was built, at a cost of \$2000, and a fine library was set up for the children and the community.

Two items were found in the Fresno Expositor, dated in 1870 and one 1872.

"Festival and Dancing Party. The good citizens of Buchanan School District are going to have a party on Friday evening, December 23, 1870, in aid of their school; the object is good and we hope it will be an immense success." Reporting on the event of December 23, 1870, it was praised very highly. The paper stated the program was the joint effort of two schools, the program elaborate, etc. There was a ball, a supper, and an abundance of sociability and good feeling manifested.

On July 10, 1872, H. C. Daulton reported that July 4 was celebrated in Buchanan by a dancing party at the School. It was also a great success.

One other social event we must not overlook. Theodore Phillips was the resident superintendent of the mines in the late 60's. Mr. Phillips and Miss Norma Wood were married there. E. C. Winchell, at that time judge of Fresno County, performed the ceremony.

The bride and groom, surrounded by relatives and the whole concourse of the camp, stood beneath the wide branches of a great oak and gave their vows. Miss Wood was the teacher there at that time. She was an aunt of Mrs. Ida Wood Cardwell of Chowchilla.

Buchanan School closed in 1894, and then most of the children went to Iron Mountain School, which was located in the east central part of Section 26, on the north bank of Wild Cat Creek. This would be approximately $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles southeast of the Dam site proper and $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles due east of the old Vignolo home ranch. We are indebted to Mrs. Ida Wood Cardwell for some excellent data on that school. School opened in 1895, first teacher Marie Wood; Mrs. Jeans 1896 - 1898; Miss Perry 1898 - 1900; Craig Cunningham 1900 - 1901; Miss Rogers 1901 - 1902; Miss Cameron 1902 - 1903; Edward Brewer 1903 - 1905, and Mr. Payne 1905 - 1906. The school closed in 1907, as there was just one pupil left, Angelo Adams, grandson of Angelo Vignolo. There were as many as 40 pupils in the beginning. The first trustees were Dar Lewis and Andrew Frickstadt - third one unknown.

Mr. Angelo Vignolo gave the school grounds. Much later Angelo Angy Adams, a grandson, bought the land. Mr. William Cartwright of Ione, California bought the land and building first. The books were turned over to Raymond Grammar School. Miss Estelle Bagnelle was the County Superintendent; she visited twice a year. Mr. Will Curtin (who ran a livery stable in Madera) always drove the horse and buggy to bring her on her visits. The school records were destroyed in the Courthouse fire in 1906.

Schools were difficult to start and maintain, but those early settlers should be commended for their effort in making it possible for their children to have an education.

Among the many pioneers of the Buchanan area one name, Dr. Charles Edgar Brown, must not be omitted. He was born in 1848, in Manchester, England. He came to Canada in 1855, taught school in Canada and in Michigan, then graduated from a medical school in Keokuk, Iowa. He commenced his medical practice in Buchanan in 1873, remaining there until the Fall of 1876. He married Matilda Gilmore, stepdaughter of Capt. R. P. Mace, in 1878. Dr. Brown was a very popular man and loved by the community. We have received some pages from one of Dr. Brown's account books, dated August, 1875, Buchanan. A few excerpts may be of interest to readers:

L. J. McCreary - Visit to see baby, six times, each visit	\$ 2.50
Sam Woods - Prescribed for baby	2.50
George Woods - Medicine for horse's back	2.00
A. Vignolo - Extract tooth for Emilio	2.00
Jack Ault - Visit and prescription	10.00
J. F. Dods - Operation	5.00
Pat Grace - Prescription for Johnnie	2.50
A. Vignolo - Visit to wife	5.00
Capt. Mace - Visit and prescription	5.00
Sam Richards - Visit and operation	5.00
Sam Dennis - Prescription for Dora	2.50
Bob Appling - Prescription	5.00

The Lewis Orrin Sharp family, pioneers in Madera County for many years, were residents of Buchanan from 1868 until 1881. Lewis O. Sharp was Justice of the Peace until his death in 1878; he also taught in the school. Lewis Orrin Sharp, the 2nd, was postmaster after his father's death, and continued until the family moved to Madera. Lewis O. Sharp became Madera's second postmaster. The Sharps had 5 children: Mabel, a teacher; Charles Eugene, station agent at Borden; Jessie, who became the wife of J. J. Houston had two children: Douglas, deceased, who was County Surveyor for many years, and Donald, who resides at Oakhurst; Orrin, and Walter. Walter is remembered for his contributions in the newspaper field and community service. Walter contributed his influence along with D. R. Hanhart, relative to the fight for water. It was partly through their efforts that the water district was formed, and both county and city bore the cost of bringing water to Madera's parched lands. Maybe Walter's interest in irrigation began when he lived at Buchanan in 1880, when great excitement occurred about the contemplated dam on the Chowchilla River?

Now let's go back to the copper mining of Buchanan. Many of the early settlers of Buchanan came looking for gold, and not finding it, raised sheep and cattle, or farmed, but continued to look for a fortune hidden in the hills. The hills were dotted with pre-emption signs, wherever the least sign of green rock appeared. Finally, when the discovery at Buchanan became known, the miners flocked in. A state report credits the Buchanan mine with shipping from the Buchanan smelter 150 tons of copper bars up to 1866. A report in 1903 stated the total shipment was 150,000 tons of rich ore. The smeltered copper and ore had to be transported to Stockton by ox team- later by mule team, then down the San Joaquin River to San Francisco by boat, then loaded on ocean vessels as ballast and sent to Swansea, Wales, where the world's largest copper reduction works were located. This was a great feat in itself. Then came declining prices, high cost of production, low copper content, and the Civil War. Then again in 1872, things began to look brighter.

From the Fresno Expositor, dated August 7, 1872, we quote: "Among the mines now taking out ore, the Buchanan heads the list. There are two shafts, each about 250 feet deep; more money and more labor is being expended on this mine than any other in the county. The character of the ore at this depth is of a class known as yellow sulphurets or chalcopyrites and is considered desirable on account of its greater permanence and quality, about 17% copper. The company is now shipping 100 tons a month. The mine is flourishing and the jolly round face and merry laugh of the superintendent indicates that copper mining pays."

The railroad from Berenda to Raymond became a reality in 1886 and could have helped in transportation. However, by this time copper mining was secondary to cattle, sheep and farming, wood cutting, also work at the Sugar Pine and other lumber mills was available.

The United States Smelting and Refining Company of Salt Lake City, Utah, bought the mining property of Buchanan in 1910 and later leased it to various companies, finally to the Krohn Brothers of Coarsegold, who shipped about 50 carloads of ore which returned a good profit.

Today, remains of the smelter (near the river) are there, also many tunnels and shafts in the low rolling hills - all that is left to tell the story of a once prosperous little town. Shipping corrals, just as you enter on the north end of the Buchanan area, are there and well kept by the Vignolos.

Several names of people have been mentioned who were in business in Buchanan: Angelo Vignolo had a store; Phillip Wilcox, a blacksmith shop; a wheelwright shop was conducted by Mr. Buckingham; a livery stable and general merchandise store by Joseph Brown. Later, the Brown store burned down, then Caesar Vignolo opened the store and was appointed postmaster in 1898. He ran this store for several years. There was a Mexican store also. The stage driver for many years was Russell Fleming. He came through three times a week, always delivering a 10 gallon keg of whiskey at \$10 per gallon.



BUCHANAN SCHOOL - 1879
Lizzie Barrett, Teacher (Judge Stanley Murray's Aunt)

Many well-known families were connected in some way, at least for awhile, with Buchanan: the Daultons, the Reas, the Raynors, the Franchi brothers, the Woods, the Sharps, the Applings, the Plaskets, the Bennetts, L. J. McCreary, John Olcese, Faust, and many more, but probably the family that remained the longest and still owns land there is the Vignolo family. Because of their long and close connection with Buchanan and the surrounding area, we have included a brief story of this family.

We are indebted to Caesar J. Vignolo, son of Caesar A. Vignolo, for this story. He was also able to give us much more data on Buchanan than anyone we interviewed, and, too, he was kind enough to loan us pictures of Buchanan.

Angelo da Vignolo, or Vignoli (pronounced Veen-yolo), pioneer of the Mother Lode, left his native Via da Vignolo in Rapallo, a Gulf of Genoa seaport, in 1842 at the age of nine years. He sailed from Italy as a cabin-boy apprenticed to his uncle, the sailing master, on a trading windjammer, and after spending several years before the mast, visiting many foreign ports, finally sailed into New York Harbor in 1847.

From New York, he sailed around Cape Horn to put into San Francisco's Golden Gate early in the year of 1848, just after the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill. Gold fever was running at a high pitch and young Angelo deserted ship to pennilessly start his quest in California. In order to earn a grubstake, he obtained a job in early San Francisco, working for a few short months as a vegetable gardener for some of his fellow countrymen.

In 1849, he was on his way into the Mother Lode in search of gold. After a short time, he decided that business held for him a more lucrative future and, in 1850, he erected the hand-hewn stone "Vignolo Trading Post" in Melones on the gold bearing banks of the Stanislaus

River. The Mexicans called the camp "Melones" because the coarse gold found there reminded them of melon seeds. The other miners, however, had another name for the place, calling it "Slumgullion," because the adobe mud was knee-deep when it rained. The four walls of this old building still stand among the trees on the bank of the river, just one-half mile above the dam at Melones. While operating this store, he remembered Joaquin Murietta as one of his many customers.

After a successful start as a merchant, Vignolo then moved to Agua Fria Creek ("cold water") where he opened a trading post and engaged in buying gold. It was while in Agua Fria, according to Mariposa County records, "that on the twentieth of February, 1858, Angelo Vignoli of Agua Fria, Mariposa County, and Margaretta Baptiste Liveroni of Mt. Ophir were united in marriage" in the Mariposa Courthouse by Justice Alfred F. Washburn.

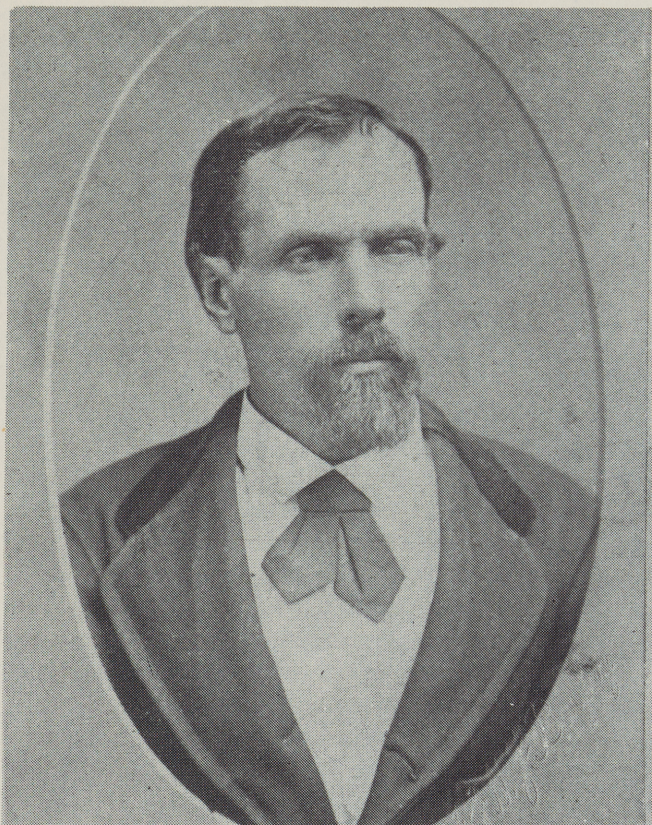
Margaretta Liveroni Vignolo was born in Genoa, Italy in 1842, and left for America at the age of five years to settle and receive her education in a San Francisco convent. She was a member of a pioneer San Francisco family and the sister of Luigi Liveroni, noted frescoe painter who did work in California's first capitol building.

During the early years of their marriage, Frank, Teresa and Juliet Vignolo were born while the family resided in the Hornitos-Mariposa area. Angelo Vignolo recorded his cattle brand, the Horseshoe M, at the Mariposa Courthouse during the late 1850's and it is still used at the ranch. As the mining subsided along Mariposa Creek, they established a store at Fresno Crossing on the Fresno River, where gold mining was still in progress. They then moved to Buchanan Hollow in 1866, where copper mining and smelting was flourishing. There they operated a store. This enterprise was given up in 1882 and Mr. Vignolo began raising sheep at the old Vignolo Home Ranch, one mile east of Buchanan. As an additional source of income, he did teaming and truck and fruit raising. The produce was hauled into the mountains to be sold to the mines and lumber mills. At Buchanan, John, Elvera, Emilio, Caesar, Beatrice, Guido, Julius and Adelina were born. After several years at sheep raising he turned to cattle ranching, which he pursued until his death in 1899 at the age of 66 years.

After the death of her husband, Margaretta Vignolo continued ranching and reared her children, remaining in Buchanan until her passing in 1906. She and her husband and various members of the family are buried at the family plot on the old Vignolo Home Ranch, east of Buchanan.

Caesar Angelo Vignolo, born January 4, 1876, remained with his mother after his father's death, and during his youth worked as a cowboy and horse trainer for the Sharon Estate. The Sharon Estate had a race track and many fine horses. While a very young man, he purchased a ranch in Buchanan which he operated until his death. During the Nineties, in Buchanan, he rebuilt and reopened the old Joseph Brown Store, which had burned. He was appointed postmaster of Buchanan Hollow by President McKinley in 1898. Later, he engaged in the store business and also operated a butcher shop and saloon in Raymond. He also raised thorobreds and Percherons with his brother John; however, the location proved unsuitable. Caesar, according to what we read and hear, must have been a good friend and advisor to many people in that area.

In 1902, he married Harriet V. Marston of Woodland, California, and established a home in Raymond. He later returned to live on the ranch in Buchanan--as a historian said, "where the cemetery residents now far exceed the living." Caesar Vignolo passed away in April, 1949 at the age of 73 years; his wife Harriet passed away in 1969. They are buried at Belmont Memorial Park in Fresno.



ANGELO VIGNOLO



MARGARETTA LIVERONI VIGNOLO



CAESAR ANGELO VIGNOLO



HARRIET MARSTON VIGNOLO

Of the 11 children born to Angelo and Margaretta Vignolo, none are now living.

Children:

Frank Vignolo - one son Frank, Jr., deceased.

Teresa - one daughter Crystal Wright Murphy, Murphy's, Calif.

Juliet Vignolo -

John Vignolo - (Dorothy Huerling, San Francisco - Caroline Martin, San Jose, Calif.

(Florence Villinger - daughter, Turlock, Calif.

(Margaret Bennett, Merced, Calif.

Elvira Vignolo Adams Holland - one son Angy Adams of Merced, Calif.

Elvira spent her entire life on the old home ranch.

Emilio Vignolo - Emily Claire Pelletier, Los Angeles, Calif.

Caesar Vignolo - one son Caesar, Shafter, Calif.

Beatrice Vignolo Lockton - one son Eugene, San Rafael, Calif.

Guido Guy Vignolo - wife Agnes resides in Visalia, Calif.

Julius Vignolo - (daughter Louise Sorich, San Jose, Calif.

(son Julius, Jr., Chowchilla, Calif.

Adelina Vignolo Hamby - son Winston, Grosse Point Farm, Michigan

Now the Buchanan area is once more a busy place. The dam once dreamed about by the early settlers of that area is now becoming a reality and will be finished in 1975. Construction is well on its way on the Chowchilla River. (There never was a bridge across the Chowchilla River at Buchanan. The stage, as well as anyone who wanted to cross it, just forded it. Old timers said the ford was so narrow that by the time the stage got into the water the four horse team was climbing up on the other bank.) In flood stage, the river was often at least a quarter of a mile wide.

The first plans for the Buchanan Dam began in 1880 by representatives from the Sharon Estates. (The Historical Society has maps and information relative to the plans for this early dam.) History says many of the early settlers fled when they heard about plans for the dam, thinking of possible floods. Those who thought of the dam were on the right track, because the present dam is located in the same spot where it was surveyed in 1880.

There are many interesting incidents we couldn't give in detail, or we didn't have the historic knowledge, but the greatest memorial to Buchanan will be the Dam and recreation area to be completed and dedicated to the many hard working and courageous people that came there and made their

contribution to Madera County and to the history of this area.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE:

Caesar J. Vignolo

Angy Adams

Research by Rintha Robbins

Compiled by Maud Lindemann

THE MADERA COUNTY HISTORIAN is published in April and October by the Madera County Historical Society, P. O. Box 478, Madera, California, 93637.

Membership dues - \$3 per year.

Historian - 50¢ a copy and is included in membership in the Society. Please credit "The Madera County Historian" when reproducing any part of it.